

## Cantucci/Biscotti

*Ieri sera abbiamo preparato i cantucci or cantuccini.*

- There are two variations: *i cantucci di Siena* (with butter, more crumbly) *e quelli di Prato* (vicino a Firenze).
- *I cantucci di Prato* are also known as *biscotti di Prato*, or in the U.S. simply as *biscotti*.
- *Biscotti* means "cooked twice": *bis* is the Latin prefix for twice (at the end of a concert we usually shout *bis!!!* instead of *encore*) and *cotti* (cooked).
- *I cantucci* are indeed baked twice. However, *in Italia usiamo* the word *biscotti* for any sorts of cookies, including those that bake only once, like chocolate chip cookies.
- The recipe below is adapted from *una ricetta di mia zia Mariolina*.

### Ingredienti

(This amount is for a couple of baking sheets of *cantucci*):

- 680 g = 1 1/2 lb di *farina bianca*
- 1 *cucchiaino di lievito istantaneo*/baking powder
- 680 g = 1 1/2 lbs di *miele/honey/* [if you do not like honey, you can instead add 2 eggs **or** some melted butter **or** extra virgin olive oil **and** 100g, about 1/2 cup of sugar. You would only need a little butter or oil- just enough to keep to dough together.]
- 4 (*quattro*) *uova*
- 100 g di *zucchero*
- 680 g = 1 1/2 lbs di *mandorle intere*/whole almonds, with skin  
[you can substitute *le mandorle* with chopped dark chocolate or *uvetta*, raisins or make a mix of the three. You may also try to use *nocciole*/hazelnuts]
- *la buccia grattugiata di un'arancia*/grated zest of one orange—you can use lemon as well.
- Optional: you can add some spices, such as vanilla, or fennel seeds, cinnamon, a little nutmeg ...

### Procedimento

1. Preheat *il forno* (oven) to 180 degrees C or 350 degrees F. Cover the baking sheet/*teglia* with parchment paper/*carta da forno*.
2. In a very large *ciotola*/bowl, place the flour mixed with the baking powder.
3. Make a well in the flour mixture and pour in the honey, using a spatula or your fingers/*le tue dita* to gently mix as you pour.
4. In a small *ciotola*, briefly mix the eggs and the sugar with a whisk. Add the orange zest.
5. Again, make a well in the center of the flour mixture. Pour into it the egg and sugar mixture. *Mescola con le mani*/with your hands or with a rubber spatula for a few minutes.

6. *Aggiungi* the almonds and *mescola* for a few more minutes. The dough will be soft, rough, and sticky.
7. Take some of the dough in your hands and place it *sulla teglia*. Press the dough to form a log the length of the baking sheet, 1-1.5 cm (~1/2") thick and 5 cm (~2") wide. Ideally, you should try to shape it such that the center is a little bit thicker. Bake for 25 minutes or until lightly brown.
8. Remove the logs from the baking sheets and place them on a cutting board. Cut each log in 0.5 cm (~1/4") pieces. If you want you can cut them on a slight diagonal.
9. Place these pieces back on the baking sheets leaning one of the cut sections against the bottom of the sheet. Bake for approximately 10 more minutes per side.
10. Remove from the oven. The *cantuccini* will become harder when they cool down.

We usually eat them dipped in a glass of *Vin Santo* (literally "holy wine", a sweet dessert wine) ... but you can dip them in milk

Note: once the *cantucci* are cooled, you can place them in tin cans and keep them for a long time. You can also freeze them.

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